

Regents Recap

Highlights of the Activities and Official Actions of the Louisiana Board of Regents

December 9, 2004

Regents Establish Program To Partner With Underperforming Schools

The Board of Regents approved a plan at its December 9 meeting that will provide at least \$1 million over the next three years to help Louisiana colleges and universities partner with underperforming schools across the state to improve student achievement. The pilot program, entitled "K-12 Underperforming Schools: Catalytic Monies for Colleges and Universities to Accelerate Elevation in Student Learning and Achievement," will target Louisiana schools identified by the Department of Education as "Academically Unacceptable" through the state's School Accountability System. The Regents' program, inspired in part by the University of New Orleans' recent takeover of the underperforming Pierre Capdau Middle School in New Orleans, will be funded through the Board of Regents Support Fund (BoRSF).

"Judging by the kind of passion for improvement we're seeing in UNO's work with Pierre Capdau, this program can make a real difference," said Regents Chairman Roland Toups. "While the resources of the Board of Regents for this purpose are limited, we hope that this initiative will help leverage other private and state dollars."

(continued on page 3)

Board of Regents Presents TOPS Report To House Education Committee

Louisiana's popular Tuition Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS) is delivering on its promises for the state. A report presented by the Board of Regents last month at a special meeting of the Louisiana House of Representatives Education Committee showed that, while work remains in getting more students academically prepared to meet TOPS eligibility requirements, the program has had a markedly positive impact on the overall level of student preparation in high school, as well as students' ability both to attend and to succeed in college. The report was presented in response to Act 1202 (2001) of the Louisiana Legislature, which required Regents to "formulate, develop, establish and implement a uniform TOPS reporting system for the purposes of policy analysis and program evaluation," and to provide accurate data and statistics to state officials and the public.



"Today's report clearly indicates the TOPS program is accomplishing the purposes for which it was intended," said Commissioner of Higher Education Joseph Savoie. "It also provides a roadmap for where we need to go to maximize the program's benefit for more of our students across the state."

According to the report, those purposes are to 1) provide financial incentives for academic performance, 2) promote academic success by requiring a rigorous high school core curriculum, 3) encourage Louisiana's "best and brightest" students to attend college in Louisiana, and 4) promote overall access to postsecondary education.

Specific positive impacts of TOPS highlighted in the presentation included the following:

Students who take the core curriculum score significantly better on the ACT, which increases their chances of qualifying for TOPS and meeting university admissions criteria.

(continued on page 3)



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Higher Education

Board Action - December 8-9, 2004

Board Receives Update on LONI Economic Development Group

Dr. Duane Blumberg, Deputy Secretary for the Louisiana Department of Economic Development, and Chief Economic Development Advisor to the LONI Management Council, updated the Board on activities of the LONI Economic Development Group, noting that career opportunities and capital investment are the important components of economic development. He told the Board that there is a need to market the state of Louisiana in order to attract businesses to the state. Dr. Blumberg said that LONI can be unique as the only statewide initiative with a specific economic development objective. The Board requested that Dr. Blumberg develop performance measures with the assistance of the LONI Management Council (LMC) to ensure that LONI is having the economic development impact the state seeks.

Regents Approve Revisions To LONI Management Council Governing Plan

Donnnie Vandal, Deputy Commissioner for Finance and Administration, reported to the Board that the LONI Management Council had raised concerns at its last meeting about the establishment of three advisory committees as noted in the Governance Plan. The Council had recommended that instead there should be three chief advisors, as well as various other advisors, who would act as resources to the LMC, thus allowing for more flexibility in gathering data, collecting information, studying alternatives, and providing information to the LMC. The Board approved the staff recommendation that the governance plan be amended to reflect a change from three advisory committees to three chief advisors in the Research, Economic Development and Technical areas and to allow more flexible involvement of other resources to the LONI Management Council.

Program Approvals

The Board approved the following proposed new academic programs, academic/research center, and progress report:

Proposed New Academic Programs:

University of Louisiana - Lafayette, Southeastern Louisiana University, and McNeese State University - M.S. in Nursing - Gerontology Specialty

Southern University, Baton Rouge - M.S. in Nursing - Gerontology Option

Proposed New Academic/Research Center :

University of Louisiana, Lafayette - Center for Structural and Functional Materials

Progress Report on Conditionally Approved Program - Southern University, Shreveport - A.S. in Nursing

Louisiana Receives Grant to Improve Educational Leadership

Dr. Jeanne Burns reported to the Board that Louisiana has been awarded a one-year grant of \$1.2 million from the Wallace Foundation to improve the training and working conditions of educational leaders in ways that result in better learning for all children, especially those with the greatest needs. This grant is renewable for up to two additional years, based on evidence of progress, for a total of up to \$3.6 million. Louisiana is one of six new states awarded a grant. The major purpose of Louisiana's grant is to create the Louisiana Educational Leaders Network in an effort to develop a corps of educational leaders at the K-12, university, and state levels trained in the latest and most effective methods of improving student achievement.

For more information on these and other Board of Regents actions, please visit our website at www.regents.state.la.us

TOPS Report (continued from page 1)

The number of first-time freshmen with TOPS enrolling in postsecondary education has increased.

The number of high school graduates leaving Louisiana for postsecondary education has decreased.

A larger number of students with higher ACT scores are remaining in LA to attend college.

Students receiving a TOPS award persist in college at a higher rate than non-TOPS students.

More students with TOPS graduate from college in a shorter period of time than non-TOPS students.

While the report demonstrated the significant value of TOPS to Louisiana, Commissioner Savoie acknowledged to the Committee that there are some issues that need to be evaluated more closely:

Why aren't more students taking the required TOPS core curriculum in high school?

Are the core curriculum courses of sufficient quality at all schools across the state?

Why are so few of the students who are eligible for TOPS Tech (a less academically-rigorous version of TOPS aimed at students who opt for technical programs) taking advantage of the opportunity?

How can the state improve TOPS eligibility among students in lower income brackets?

Underperforming Schools (continued from page 1)

Under the program, colleges and universities, in conjunction with the schools and school districts in question, will submit proposals for catalytic (startup) funding to support partnership activities ranging from providing a particular service (such as collaborative leadership in school planning) to undertaking a complete school takeover like the UNO-Pierre Capdau arrangement. Other specifics of the program include the following:

- Initial proposals will be reviewed during 2005-06.
- Catalytic monies for colleges and universities must complement rather than supplant existing institutional resources.
- A minimum of \$1,000,000 BoRSF dollars will be provided for the three years of the pilot program.
- Awards will be made on a competitive basis. Proposals will be reviewed by out-of-state consultants.
- There will be one round of competition. Successful projects will be funded for three years from FY 2005-06 through FY 2007-08.
- The Board of Regents will decide whether to continue the program after evaluating its effectiveness during 2007-08.
- Campuses will be required to abide by relevant accountability requirements of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education.

"As we've said on many occasions, elementary, secondary and postsecondary education are really one enterprise," said Commissioner of Higher Education Joseph Savoie. "This program is an excellent example of targeting resources to improve student achievement. We can't expect to improve college access and the state's economy unless we help address academic preparation in our elementary and secondary schools."

The Board also approved a recommendation that a one-day workshop be held on January 12, 2005, to develop guidelines, including a request for proposals (RFP), for implementation of the program.